



**MenEngage Alliance**  
working with men and boys for gender equality



# The Accountability Framework

of MenEngage Alliance

The Accountability Framework of MenEngage Alliance consists of three core documents:

**Our Core Principles** set out the values, principles, and commitments shared by members of MenEngage Alliance.

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**Our Code of Conduct** outlines the behaviors and practices we commit to upholding as individuals working for gender justice.

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**Our Accountability Standards** relate to institutional commitments and aspirations for how we do our work. They set out standards of practice to which we and our members can be held accountable.

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Together, these documents form a foundation for our shared values, principles, practices, and commitments as individuals, as organizations, and as a collective.

The MenEngage Alliance Accountability Framework was developed through a consultative and participatory process between 2020 and 2022. It was done together with our members globally and with support from feminist partners.

The Accountability Framework supports us to improve standards and accountable practices across our shared work. It helps foster a shared sense of understanding and commitment to change across MenEngage Alliance.

The intention of these documents is to be a basis for inspiration, connection, and discussion on an ongoing basis. It is expected they will evolve and change over time, as we continue our collective journeys of growth and learning around transforming patriarchal masculinities and working with men and boys for gender justice.

What we believe

# **Our Core Principles**

We are an international community with a shared mission to end patriarchal power by working with men and boys and challenging harmful and rigid notions of masculinity, for gender and social justice.

Our Core Principles are an agreed set of commitments, values, and aspirations for the work we do.

As individuals, organizations, and as a collective, these principles affirm our beliefs and values, guide our efforts, and inspire our work for gender justice, social justice, and human rights for all. For a world where all people are equal and free from discrimination and oppression.



## We stand for women's rights and gender justice

We recognize that women and girls continue to face significant gender injustices and human rights violations around the world. This must urgently change. We work towards this change through dismantling the roots of gender-based violence and injustices.

We honor the historical struggles and achievements of feminist women's rights movements.

We commit to working in allyship with feminist women's rights organizations, networks, and movements. We respect feminist leadership, voices, and spaces. We support feminist demands and political agendas.

We seek to transform unequal gendered power relations. We strive to free women, men, and people of diverse gender identities from the impact of restrictive gender and sexual norms.



# 1

# 2

## **We embrace intersectional feminism**

We seek to understand how gender inequalities show up in relation to other injustices, such as homophobia, transphobia, racism, ageism, ableism, xenophobia, classism, or based on faith-based and/or religious beliefs or backgrounds. We recognize that people are impacted differently by oppression, and that some people are impacted in multiple ways at the same time. These layers of oppression and intersecting issues disproportionately impact women and girls, gender non-conforming people, people of color, disabled people, and ethnic minorities.

We aspire to be guided by those who have been disproportionately marginalized by various forms of oppression, discrimination, and injustices.

We work to inspire men and boys to explore how they can support intersectional feminist goals and take responsible actions for social justice.

We recognize the diversity of men and boys and that they do not all experience power and privilege in the same way.

# 3

## **We support human rights for all**

We abide by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and other International Human Rights Instruments.

We commit to advocate and hold governments accountable so that they recognize, uphold, promote, and protect human rights for all.

# 4

## **We work to disrupt and end patriarchy**

We recognize that patriarchy is an oppressive system that affects everyone in all societies. We understand patriarchy as a system that values masculinity over femininity, and which collectively grants men and boys power over women, girls and gender non-conforming people.

We work to end patriarchal patterns of exploitation of people and the planet. We oppose extractive economic models and work to end their control over bodies, land, and livelihoods. We strive to transform the political systems of privilege and power that support them.

We believe in the universal bond of solidarity and interconnectedness of all people and the planet. We see ourselves as part of a collective of movements towards a future based on sustainability, care, and wellbeing for all people and the planet in all its biodiversity.





## **We celebrate and embrace diverse identities, expressions, and characteristics of sex, gender and sexuality**

We firmly support the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer individuals, in all diversities.

We recognize sexuality and gender identities as complex, flexible, diverse and fluid.

We work to transform harmful social norms that privilege cis-gender and heterosexual identities over diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sexual characteristics.

We work with men, boys, and people of all genders to call out homophobia and heteronormativity.

# 6

## We strive to address racism and its root causes

We acknowledge that we exist within, and are part of, histories and systems of white supremacy, colonialism and racism.

We stand against colonialist, nationalistic, and ethnic oppression in any part of the world.

We recognize the urgent need to challenge racism in all its forms, including, anti-Blackness, and anti-Indigeneity globally.

We make space for ongoing collective reflection, education, and action for racial justice.

We go beyond being non-racist, to being actively anti-racist.



# 7

## **We believe in the capability of men and boys to actively support gender, social, and climate justice**

We believe in our shared humanity.

We believe that all men and boys, in all their diversities, can critically understand, reject and overcome dominant, controlling, restrictive, and harmful definitions of manhood.

We strive to overcome patriarchal barriers so that men and boys can fully develop their capacities for empathy, care and peace.

We believe men and boys must act for rights, justice, health, and the wellbeing of women, girls, and people of all genders.

We understand that men and boys are both privileged and damaged by patriarchy. We believe that everyone – including men and boys – will benefit from a gender-just world.

# 8

## We strive to decolonize our systems, practices, values, and mindsets

We question, unpack and challenge how colonial, eurocentric, and dominant Global-North power structures continue to produce inequalities around the world.

We work to transform these highly unequal global power structures and the patriarchal notions of manhood that support them.

We respect the leadership and wisdom of oppressed and Indigenous cultures and voices.

We recognize the ways colonialism continues to have a profound impact on gender inequalities and other forms of oppression and exclusion around the world.

We strive to embody and promote inclusive structures in which power is equally shared across nations and communities. We critically examine how our work – including its funding – is embedded in oppressive and exclusionary structures based on the legacy of colonialism, and how our words and actions risk reproducing its harmful dynamics.



## **We believe that transformation must begin with ourselves**

We acknowledge that we exist within and as part of oppressive systems, and that transforming them means also transforming ourselves. Personal transformation is deeply interwoven into social change.

We promote ongoing reflective practices among men and boys for transformative awareness of themselves, of others, and of the systems from which complex social problems arise.

We strive to remain conscious of the harms inflicted by patriarchy, racism, colonialism, capitalism, religious fundamentalism, and their interconnected oppressive systems.

We give space for personal and collective healing; self and collective care.

We bring our whole selves – our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and our values – to the work to eliminate patriarchy.

# 10

## **We are accountable for our words, actions, and decisions**

We welcome criticism and feedback. We commit to taking it on board, and learning, growing, and responding in accountable ways.

We commit to listening to, consulting with, and partnering with feminist women's rights organizations, LGBTIQ rights groups, and diverse movements for racial justice, youth, economic and climate justice, peace, religious freedom, and many others.

We hold ourselves accountable to these feminist partners in the contexts where we work.

We strive to be accountable to the communities, organizations, partners and groups that are impacted by our work, activism, behaviors, attitudes and practices. This includes accountability among ourselves and our leadership across MenEngage Alliance networks.

We foster democratic, transparent, and power-sharing approaches. We see accountability as fundamental to a world of shared power, equality, and justice.





# **Our Code of Conduct**

As individuals and leaders, our behaviors need to reflect the principles and mission of MenEngage Alliance. This Code of Conduct reflects the values that members of MenEngage Alliance, at local, national, regional, and global levels, commit to living by, while recognizing we continue learning, carrying blind spots, and making mistakes.

It applies to all the members of MenEngage Alliance, at country, regional and global network levels. MenEngage Alliance has a Global Board and a Global Secretariat.

People who belong to any of these bodies must sign and abide by this Code of Conduct, in addition to interns, and consultants.

This Code of Conduct forms an integral part of our accountability framework together with the Core Principles and Accountability Standards. This Code of Conduct focuses on individual behaviors, whereas the Core Principles and Accountability Standards focus more on our shared beliefs and our accountability systems and practices.





## Values and behaviors members are expected to practice:

### Respect and kindness

We respect and care for each other, practice kindness, and treat others as we would like to be treated. We recognize that the intentions of our actions are not the primary consideration, but their impact on how they are felt and experienced. We listen to others in order to understand and empathize. We appreciate their perspectives, even when we disagree.

We approach those with whom we have a conflict directly and respectfully or seek support to address the issue in a constructive way. We seek to appreciate others' strengths and accept others' limitations. We seek to provide useful feedback and frame mistakes as opportunities to learn.

We are mindful of unequal power in our relations with others. We commit not to take advantage of these differences and rather seek to create power-balanced relationships.

Beyond respect for each other as human beings, we commit to respect the earth community: other animals, plants, air, water, soil, and minerals –of which we are part.



# 2

## Affirmative Consent

We ensure informed consent when interacting with others. We are mindful that power differentials may compromise consent. Gender, lower authority or status, or lack of resources can inhibit free decisions by the individual or group with less power.

We respect the privacy of others and do not reveal the personal information of others without explicit permission.

In sexual and any other intimate relations, we commit to affirmative consent to make sure the other party agrees freely and voluntarily. We know that people have the right to revoke consent at any moment. We know that affirmative consent cannot be given if a person is subordinated, intoxicated, unconscious, suffers a cognitive disability, or is a child.



## Fairness and Equality

We see and treat others fairly and as equals. We oppose oppressive hierarchies that propel us to treat others as inferior or superior, denying the equal humanity, rights and dignity of each individual.

We work on our unconscious biases in how we perceive ourselves and others. We aim to see others' behaviors as reflecting their individualities, and not as representing their gender, race, nationality, sexuality, etc.

We strive to make opportunities and benefits equitably available for all. We foster an environment of inclusion, solidarity, and belonging. We strive to engage in horizontal relationships regardless of the position of individuals in MenEngage Alliance, in our networks, and in our organizations.

## Ethical decision making

We make our decisions guided by the best interests of people and the planet, and not by personal gains. Our decisions affects our collective work and mission. We know that our decisions impact communities that are under different forms of oppression and marginalizations, including non-human communities.

When faced with ethical dilemmas, we check with others, our colleagues and leaders, and with other relevant feminist leaders and experts.

We seek to make our resources use efficient to care for our planet and our funding. We treat confidential information as important and protect it.

# 5

## Transparency and honesty

We commit to honesty in our communication with others. We commit to be transparent about our plans, intentions, and decisions. Whenever possible, we make public our sources of funding, annual budgets, and spending.

We strive to share accurate information about MenEngage Alliance, the network, and our organizations. We recognize and do not blame others for our own mistakes. If we commit to something it is because we mean it. Our reports of potential misconduct, complaints, or concerns are made in good faith, never making false allegations against others. We advocate for due and fair process for all involved.

We disclose to the relevant people any potential conflicts of interest with no delay.



# 6

## Self-reflection and growth

We aspire to be self-critical of our actions, evaluate our relationships and decisions, and be open to discussing mistakes and learning from them. We seek and listen to feedback that others give us, and take action accordingly.

Since in our work with men and boys we promote critical self-reflection about patriarchal power and privileges, we must expect the same of ourselves. Our inner work gives the foundation to reach others and challenge patriarchy.

Self-reflection is connected to self and collective care to create the space for new insights and growth.

## Solidarity as an upstander

When witnessing or suspecting wrongdoing, we do not look the other way. We know that people may be harmed and that silence is a form of complicity. Whether we have concerns related to harmful institutional practices or to individual acts, we may consult with the individual(s) impacted by the wrongdoing, and/or reach out to the person engaged in such practice in order to interrupt.

Alternatively, we may communicate the issue to the appropriate body/authority, provided the affected person gives consent. Raising concerns is a way to promote justice and accountability and to act in solidarity with those negatively affected.

## Behaviors MenEngage members commit not to engage in:

### Abusive behavior

This includes a wide range of harmful behaviors which are intimidating, rude, unwelcome, offensive, demeaning, and that disrespect the dignity and autonomy of others.

Bullying, incivility, explosive anger, verbal and physical violence, and retaliation are examples of abusive behaviors. They can also be displayed in subtle forms, such as patronizing attitudes, ignoring their voice, disrespectful body language, gossiping and harsh criticism.

# 7

# 8



# 9

## Sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation

Sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation have in common the abuse of power due to power imbalances between two or more parties, which can exacerbate a lack of consent.

Sexual harassment is manifested in unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Offensive remarks about a person's sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or expression is also sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes work environments hostile towards women or other people targeted for discrimination. Harmful images and discriminatory jokes or remarks are abusive and disrespectful.

For details, see MenEngage Sexual Harassment Policy and Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

## Discrimination

Discrimination entails treating people negatively on the basis of their race, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religion, disabilities, or any other trait. It can manifest in behavior or language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, and classist.

Policies and institutional decisions against individuals or groups based on prejudices are also instances of discrimination. Favoritism toward those with certain backgrounds or traits and exclusion of those coming from marginalized communities are other forms of discrimination.

# 10

## Conflicts of interest

It refers to situations in which personal interests are in conflict (or could be in conflict) with the interests of the organization, network, or MenEngage Alliance. They are decisions or actions that benefit specific members, or their family or friends, affecting the interests of the collective.

If a member or staff member is presented with a situation whose outcome creates personal benefit for him or herself, friends or relations, or the member organization, at the expense of the integrity of MenEngage, there may be a conflict of interest and it should be avoided.

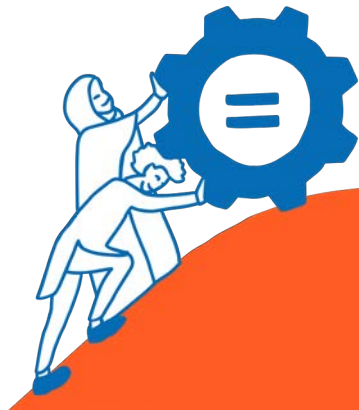
For more details, see MenEngage Conflict of Interest Policy.

## Fraud and corruption

Fraudulent or corrupted behavior may stem from the abuse of power, or the position within an organization, allowing access to data, resources, and services for personal gain. This includes the abuse of entrusted power and authority for private gain.

Any person who performs duties connected to MenEngage Alliance must avoid these behaviors.

For more details, see MenEngage Corruption-Fraud Prevention Policy.



# 13

## Substance use disorder

Having a problematic pattern of using alcohol or another Substance is both self-harming and can cause harm to others. If a MenEngage Alliance member is at risk of or has a Substance use disorder, we will encourage them to seek professional help immediately.

Members should not engage in work under the influence of alcohol or other Substances. They must use good judgment when consuming alcohol and never drink in a way that makes others feel threatened or disrespected, endangers the safety of others, or violates the law.

### Notes on implementation

Members are expected to read and sign this document and related policies. Learning spaces will be offered to reflect on these commitments and support each other. Anyone can report breaches of this Code of Conduct. In addition to all leaders of the Alliance, there are focal points per regional network who receive concerns and there is also an anonymous hotline. See our Reporting a Concern webpage for further guidance.

Corrective actions will be taken when breaches of this Code of Conduct occur, which may take the form of restorative approaches or disciplinary actions. Other measures of civil and penal responsibility may also be taken, according to the law of the land.





# **Accountability Standards**

We strive to be accountable to the communities, organizations, members, partners and groups that are impacted by and that influence our work. This includes accountability among ourselves across MenEngage Alliance networks. We commit to be answerable to all our stakeholders, and accept being held responsible for our decisions and actions, or inactions.

The following Standards guide accountable practices at the personal, organizational, and network levels. Some are directed at MenEngage Alliance members as individuals; others are intended at leaders of MenEngage Alliance at various levels, while some guidelines apply to our member organizations and networks.



They aim to create expectations and boundaries, promote good practices and a culture of accountability, nurture better relationships, prevent and manage wrongdoings. These Standards are intended to be seen in conjunction with the **MenEngage Alliance Core Principles, Code of Conduct**, Sexual Harassment Policy and Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, as each of these instruments complements the others.

MenEngage Regional and country networks are encouraged to adapt and contextualize these Standards.

**It is recommended that MenEngage country and regional networks adapt and contextualize these standards.**

## General Standards

Work as allies to feminist women's rights, LGBTIQ rights, and youth activists organizations, networks and movements. Engage in open and meaningful dialogue with them. Seek and respond to their feedback, accepting their influence on your work. Respect their leadership, agency, voices, and spaces. Support their vision, agendas, political campaigns and actions.

Listen, consult and build meaningful partnerships with feminist women's rights organizations, LGBTIQ, youth, child rights, anti-racist, climate, and diverse social justice organizations. Think of multiple ways this can be done, such as having advisory groups, representatives of these movements on board of directors and steering committees, as consultants, holding accountability dialogues, etc.

The experiences and voices of women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people – especially the most marginalized due to their gender, sexuality, racial, ethnic, economic, and diverse identities – should be central in our work.

Recognize the diversity within feminist movements and discern carefully when supporting the positions of some feminist actors that may conflict with other feminists' views. Avoid taking sides to certain groups and thereby differentiating "which groups" we are accountable to. Support the common principles of feminist movements in all their diversity.

Listen and learn about men's and boys' diverse identities, experiences, needs and aspirations. Understand their complex relations with power, privilege, and harm. Address power, privilege, and men's responsibilities in your work with men and boys.

Commit to inner-work. Ground your social activism in self-awareness, self-care, and healing. Commit to reflecting on privilege and power, both in personal and public spheres. Nurture collective spaces of mutual care, healing, inner transformation, critical self-reflection, and wellbeing.

Make your work publicly available and be open to criticism. Take actions to address personal or institutional practices that go against our principles. Acknowledge harm caused and make amends.

Foster a culture of accountability within our networks and organizations, in which information and power is shared. Show your commitment toward your colleagues. Be a good team player and answerable to others. Hold each other accountable.

## 2

### **Accountability at the organizational, national, and regional network level**

Support member organizations, and MenEngage networks to adapt and contextualize the Core Principles, Code of Conduct, Accountability Standards, and Sexual Harassment Policy of the Alliance. Make these instruments context responsive and collectively owned.

Promote critical reflections on the work with men and boys, identifying areas for improvement and strategies to remain accountable.

Strengthen capacities on intersectional feminist principles and accountability mechanisms with leaders and members. Organize workshops and other learning opportunities.

Promote meaningful participation and leadership of women's rights leaders and organizations, youth leaders, antiracists, LGBTIQ, and other social justice movements within governance and decision-making structures of member organizations, the country, and regional networks. Aim to have gender parity in the leadership positions.

Hold accountability dialogues with key stakeholders (women's and LGBTIQ rights organizations, Indigenous and antiracist movements, youth and children's rights groups, and any other most marginalized groups).

## Accountability when responding to concerns and complaints

Nurture an enabling organizational and network culture and mechanisms for individuals and organizations to come forward with concerns and complaints.

Disseminate multiple channels by which anyone can file complaints or provide critical feedback about the work of the Alliance and that of its members. Include an anonymous complaint mechanism. Use and promote the MenEngage Global reporting page to seek and collect feedback.

Act promptly. Address all complaints and queries. Acknowledge receipt of complaints, commit to addressing them promptly and report back in due time.

Ensure objective review of complaints and that all parties are fairly treated. Respect their rights to privacy and safety. Protect whistleblowers. Consider neutral parties that can assist in these processes.

Whenever possible, adopt a restorative justice approach<sup>1</sup>, if agreed by those affected. Ensure accountability not only 'calls out' bad behavior, but also develops spaces whereby people who have made mistakes are able to reflect, learn, make amends, and do better.

Strengthen local accountability mechanisms led by MenEngage networks and members at the country and regional levels. When concerns and complaints come from issues that happened at the local level, agree on what roles in the response MenEngage national, regional, and global must take, and seek collaboration.

# 3



<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the MenEngage Alliance Sexual Harassment Policy for more information on this approach.

# 4

## Accountable programming

Partner meaningfully with women's rights, LGBTIQ rights and youth-led (as relevant) organizations in the design, delivery, and evaluation of projects and initiatives. Consult with leaders from these movements when planning new projects or initiatives. Whenever possible and appropriate, offer compensation or other incentives when requesting support from local women's organizations and leaders.

Ensure that women, girls, and gender-nonconforming individuals provide feedback about interventions with men and boys in their communities. Ensure that your work is informed by their needs and aspirations. Make them part of your decision-making processes.

Ensure gender-transformative and intersectional approaches when designing interventions and programs to work with men, boys, and male-identified people; avoid reinforcing male domination, white supremacy, homophobia and transphobia, in messages and processes.

Recognize that male power and privilege will show up in activities with men and boys, either from participants and/or from program leaders.

Therefore, be prepared to address harmful statements or actions and provide intensive training and ongoing support to group leaders.

Ensure that programs and initiatives are properly informed by the "Do No Harm" principle. This means, staff vigilant for any unintended consequences that could cause harm or reinforce injustice and inequality. Prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all individuals impacted by our activities, programs and projects.

Consider that gender transformative work with men and boys addresses the personal, the relational, the institutional, and the structural levels. If your work only focuses on one of these levels, seek partnerships with those working on the others.

Build the evidence on the impact of the work we do with men and boys and on transforming masculinities. Integrate into your programs monitoring, evaluation and learning components to collect lessons learned and document promising practices.

# 5



## Accountable advocacy

Work in alignment with the feminist advocacy agendas, thereby amplifying their work. Learn about what kinds of solidarity actions feminist, antiracist, youth, and other social justice advocates demand. Disseminate their calls to action, activist statements, join their demonstrations, and support requests for input on their proposals.

Add value to the broader feminist and social justice agenda through the mens and masculinities lens.

Build advocacy partnerships with feminist, women's rights, SOGIESC, anti-racist, climate, youth, and social justice activists, organizations, networks and movements. Integrate advocacy interests of feminist women's rights and gender justice movements into your advocacy objectives.

Foster meaningful advocacy partnerships in the policy spaces in which you work—international, regional, national, or local. Prevent from competing or working in silos, operating on your own.

Challenge discourses that overtly center a masculinities agenda or that solely focus men as victims of patriarchy. Do not enter in competition to efforts that center recognition and resources for the needs of women and girls.

Commit to advancing an intersectional feminist political analysis on all policy work on men and masculinities. Resist attempts to keep the agenda apolitical and unanchored in feminist struggles and realities.

When policies include a men and masculinities lens, advocate to follow a feminist process and analysis from policy design, content, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

## Accountable fundraising

Be mindful of the impact that your fundraising for the work with men and boys may have on those of women's rights organizations, particularly on small organizations that struggle with funding. Prevent competition and rather seek to share resources by:

- advocating before donors for more resources to gender transformative work in general and to women's rights civil society
- organizations in particular partnering with women's rights organizations in the design, fundraising, and delivery of projects
- advocating for the direct share of funds to local women's led groups and initiatives
- sharing information or inviting women's rights organizations to spaces in which new fundraising opportunities are discussed
- raise donors' awareness about reducing competition and power-hierarchies among those working for gender justice

Before embarking on fundraising, assess how services offered by women's rights organizations are funded, and advocate for resources for them.





# 7

## Accountable to children, youth, and young people

Strengthen youth leadership and meaningful engagement, including in decision-making structures, within the member organizations and networks. Challenge adultism as a systemic form of discrimination of children and youths.

Ensure that young people's leadership, expertise, and perspectives in all their diversity become central for MenEngage Alliance's work and organizing.

Build and strengthen community among young people locally, nationally, and across regions. In addition, promote intergenerational exchange and dialogue.

Recognize that young people have the skills and knowledge to lead and participate in the work of MenEngage Alliance. Adult leaders have a responsibility to create opportunities for youth leadership, including passing the torch on to new generations of leaders.

Adopt policies and procedures to ensure that your organization and network provide a safe and secure environment for all children and young people who participate in our activities. Our commitment to safeguarding of children and young people is a priority<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> To find out more, see the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy of MenEngage Alliance



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working with men and boys for gender equality

[www.menengage.org](http://www.menengage.org)



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